

Education Governance Responses
Barre Meeting (4/3/07) – Spaulding High School Library

18 Attendees (facilitated by George Appenzeller)

Question #1: What are the advantages and disadvantages of the present education governance system in your community?:

Advantages

Each school can address its unique needs
Shared curriculum development
Shared administrative services/reduces cost
Shared resources
Planning (efficient coordination)
Close-proximity of schools and communities
Community pride
Autonomy of each district. Citizens feel connected and can be heard.
Pride of ownership. School is the center of the community.
Closer to kids and closer to community. More diverse school board members
More representation/people
Ultimate local control

Disadvantages

Conflicts, rivalry, competition among boards
Many meetings for one superintendent
Cumbersome decision-making process
Too many meetings
Resources K12 not centralized
Inefficiency in facility and school structure
“turf” issues
Disparate communities in one su
Too many chiefs
Superintendent burn out
Inconsistent curriculum, calendars \$ expectations
Students come to with different backgrounds
Different from businesses – may be a disconnect
Hard to know from the outside who’s in charge
Hard to get school board members
Role of superintendent/staff - not doable – too many bosses; too many boards
Local control thwarts broader interests
Board relations difficult
Too many bargaining units
Lack continuity of curriculum
Difficult to budget
Difficult finding consensus

Question #2: What are the advantages and disadvantages of the school district model suggested by Commissioner Cate in his White Paper?

Advantages

Financial advantages
Common educational standards and curriculum
Free up superintendent for education matters
Less chaotic
More “professional” school board members
Coordination and collaboration of curriculum K-12
Manageable system for administrator to be an educational leader
Focus is on the big picture
Economic “plus” for small schools
Shared responsibilities for all schools by all board and community members
Greater opportunities for all students
Financial advantage in centralized purchasing
Common contracts, calendar
Staffing efficiencies
Streamlines
Line of control well defined
Opportunity for coherent planning
Calendar and negotiations simplified
Consolidating services/purchases
Impact on budgets
Consolidating some schools more benefits to students opportunities

Disadvantages

Harder to get citizen involvement
Fewer educational models
Vote will have less impact
School board less connected to schools
Lose sense of community
Citizens might hold back
Board may be politicized
Cost out of control
Perception of loss of local control
Loss of intense focus on each school
Possible disproportionate representation (H.S. vs. elementary schools)
Perceived loss of local control
Loss of connection to administration and board by both community and staff
Counter to “Vermont” identity larger isn’t necessarily better
Less representation/voices from community
Resistance to change/communities
Policy and contractual changes impact on budgets

Debrief Comments:

Focus on the best interests of the kids
Avoid administrative disconnect from daily operation of school (no high-rise bureaucracy)
Preserve sense of uniqueness of each community
Expansion of public/private model
Secondary/post-secondary blending
Blending of regular/technical education programs
Independence of commissioner
Single statewide district
K-16 (or beyond) system
Opportunities options for careers
Fund the optimal school
Criteria for school board members
Criteria for board roles/defined
Parent ombudsman
State contract
Outstanding teacher awards
K-12 and post secondary ed. blend
Bus times already long – how long if close small schools?
People aren't fearing change as expected
Options allow towns to save small schools
Unanimity in the room
Sensitivity essential in transitions/consolidations to community
If move to another model, big
Sell will be needed
Barre having these conversations; may be different in rural areas of where there are small schools they fear will close
Underlying tension between escalating cost and Vermont identity/values
Incentives for consolidation
Criteria for board members is an interesting idea
Good idea for Barre – how do we move on this? State statute does not make hard to do
Barre model – low per pupil cost